

R 171414Z JAN 85
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7774
INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS//SCJ2//
DIA WASHDC
JCS//J5//WASHDC
USSOUTHCOM QUARRY HEIGHTS//JS//
USAFSO/DOI HOWARD AFB PN

UNCLAS BOGOTA 00555

E.O. 12356: N/A

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SUBJECT: DISSIDENT FARC GROUP ATTACKS COLOMBIAN
NAVY BOAT

1. ON JANUARY 14 A DISSIDENT COLUMN OF FARC GUERRILLAS
ATTACKED A COLOMBIAN NAVY BOAT ON PATROL IN THE
MAGDALENA RIVER, SOUTH OF BARRANCABERMEJA IN
SANTANDER DEPARTMENT. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS,
THREE MARINES WERE KILLED AND THREE OTHERS WOUNDED.
THE NAVY BOAT WAS FIRED UPON BY APPROXIMATELY 20
MEN ARMED WITH MORTARS AND SUB-MACHINE GUNS.

2. MILITARY SOURCES INDICATED TO REPORTERS THAT
FOUR NAVY BOATS WERE EN ROUTE TO ECOPETROL
INSTALLATIONS IN THE TOWN OF CASABLE TO REFUEL AND
THEN WERE TO CONTINUE PATROLLING THE MAGDALENA RIVER
WHEN THE SURPRISE STRIKE OCCURRED. THE MASKED
GUERRILLAS ATTACKED FROM SPEEDBOATS AND THEN
FLED DOWN RIVER, AFTER SEIZING ARMS FROM SOME OF
THE NAVY BOATS.

3. THE SAILORS IDENTIFIED THE GUERRILLAS AS
MEMBERS OF THE FARC. THE BOGOTA PAPER "EL TIEMPO"
REPORTED HAVING RECEIVED A COMMUNIQUE FROM THE
DISSIDENT RICARDO FRANCO FRONT WHICH PROCLAIMED
THE FRONT'S INTENTION TO CONTINUE ARMED COMBAT.

4. COMMENT: THIS IS THE LATEST AND MOST VIOLENT
OF SEVERAL RECENT INCIDENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN
VARIOUSLY ATTRIBUTED TO ELN AND FARC GUERRILLAS.
END COMMENT.

5. DAO COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST MAJOR INCIDENT IN
THE RELATIVELY QUIET MAGDALENA MEDIO REGION IN SEVERAL
MONTHS. IT IS ALSO THE FIRST TIME THAT THE INSURGENTS
HAVE ATTACKED THE MARINE CORPS/NAVY PATROL BOATS
WITH SUCH BRUTALITY AND IMPUNITY. AFTER CORINTO
THE GENERAL TREND IN THE MOST RECENT GUERRILLA/TERRORIST
ACTS IS TO PLACE THE BLAME ON FARC DISSIDENT GROUPS
OR THE PROSCRIBED ELN--WHILE THE PEACE PROCESS MOVES
ON OVER VERY SHAKY GROUNDS. END DAO COMMENT.

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